

203. The Gospel of John 20:19-23

A New Beginning

A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
(1-1-23)

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Today is January 1st—New Year's Day, a day will celebrate as the beginning of a new year.

Every new year brings with it new hope—hope that, in this new year, God will make things in our lives new in the sense of new opportunities for work, new strength for victory over old sins, hope for reconciliation with loved ones—the hope that this new year will be a better year than last year!

And so, I typically will give some kind of special New Year's Day message that centers on a new beginning—you, know, something along the lines of *“forgetting those things that are behind and reaching forward to those things which are a head”*—in other words, a message focusing on the new and exciting things God may want to do in our lives this year!

However, as I thought and prayed about it—the Lord directed me back to our study in John's gospel.

You see, in our study in John's gospel we are in chapter 20—a chapter that records for us the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the greatest new beginning (the title of this message) in the history of the world—it speaks of new life (resurrection life)!

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ has further made possible the new covenant and with it the new commission—

“As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” (verse 21)—we call it the ‘Great Commission!’

I'm getting ahead of myself—let's start by looking at verse 19:

John 20:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ Then, the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, “Peace be with you.”

We need to understand that Jesus' resurrection body was a real body of *‘flesh and bones’*—yet He had the power to pass through walls, doors and other physical barriers contrary to any of the known laws of physics as we understand them.

Now, John doesn't tell us about Jesus' meeting with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus the afternoon of His resurrection that we looked at last time in Luke 24.

And how that after spending the afternoon talking with them, and how He, “*expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself*” (Luke 24:27)—He agreed to stay with them for dinner.

Luke tells us that at dinner as He broke the bread (leading them in communion) that their eyes were opened, and they knew it was Jesus (could it be they saw the nail wounds in His hands?)—and at that moment He disappeared causing them to hurry back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples what had happened!

It was now Sunday evening—the eleven apostles (minus Judas who had hanged himself) were assembled together, perhaps in the same upper room where they had met three nights earlier.

You see, they were fearful that the Jewish leaders and the Roman soldiers would be coming to arrest and crucify them next—when suddenly they saw Jesus standing in their midst (with the doors still closed and locked)! It’s interesting that the first thing the Lord said to His disciples as they were gathered together behind closed doors on the evening of His resurrection was—“**Peace be with you!**”

He didn’t say “*joy be with you*” or “*grace be with you*” or even “*love be with you*”—He said, “**Peace be with you**”—why peace and not the others?

There are a couple of reasons for this:

First of all, they thought He was a ghost and were terrified—and therefore He was trying to calm their fears:

Luke 24:33–40 (NKJV)

³³ So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, ³⁴ saying, “The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” ³⁵ And they told about the things *that had happened* on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread. ³⁶ Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, “Peace to you.” ³⁷ But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit [*‘a ghost’*]. ³⁸ And He said to them, “Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹ Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.” ⁴⁰ When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.

One commentator said this—

“Notice, that even though He has a glorified body, there are the nail prints and the pierced side. There is a strange similarity to that body which had been nailed to the cross. The scars are there. Now, I do not think that there will be scars on our (glorified) bodies. I think these scars are on His body because they are the scars He bore for us. He was scarred for us so that you and I might be presented without spot or blemish before Him.”

And that brings us to the second reason Jesus said “**Peace be with you**” to His disciples—it spoke of the peace that they now had with God!

The Bible talks about 2 different kinds of peace that are associated with our relationship with God—‘*peace with God*’; and ‘*the peace of God*’—and you cannot know the ‘*peace of God*’ without first experiencing ‘*peace with God*.’

A. Peace with God

Romans 5:1 (NKJV)

¹ Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

God's Word teaches us that we were born into this world as children of Adam—separated from God through the Fall and at enmity with Him (rebels at war with God) having the wrath of God (judgment) abiding upon us (John 3:36).

Further, the Bible teaches that, at one time, God also considered us *His* enemies—in other words, He was at enmity with fallen man as well.

Now let me stop here and say this—yes, there are a lot of people who go through life determined not to speak with God or to acknowledge His presence, or to bow to His will for their lives—in other words, they're at war with God.

Why are they at war with God? Because they blame Him for some tragedy or disappointment they have suffered in life.

Maybe they lost someone dear to them to sickness or to an accident of some kind—close family or a dear friend.

Or maybe it was the loss of their health or the loss of a business they spent years building only to see it wiped away by the COVID lockdowns—or some other tragedy.

(I know of a well-known evangelist who turned away from God and become an atheist because of all the evil in the world including famine and war—which he believed a loving God would never allow if He were real—therefore he reasoned God is a myth and became an atheist.)

But for those who haven't become atheists—this thinking has caused many people to blame God for the evil in their lives to the point that they want nothing to do with Him—they hate God and have declared war on Him. But listen, the vast majority of people at war with God don't even know that they *are* at war with Him—they would say, *"I've never been at war with God, I love God!"*

And as *proof* of their *'love for God'*—they point to how *'religious'* they are (*'I go to church, I keep holy days and sacraments, I light candles and pray the rosary etc.*).

What they don't realize is that *religion* is another form of rebellion against God—the very rebellion the Jewish people manifested toward God through their devotion to Judaism (a religious system) while having rejected Jesus as their Savior and King.

Romans 10:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. ² For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³ For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.

So, returning to the point I was making—the Bible presents a picture of God and man after the Fall with their backs turned toward each other “arms folded” (you might say), signifying the enmity both had for one another.

But then Jesus died on the cross for sinners—causing God's righteousness to be satisfied ('propitiated') because sin had now been paid for.

The result was that God turned and faced man (who still had his back turned toward God in stubborn rebellion)—God turned toward us with His hands extended inviting us to come to Him for forgiveness, fellowship and eternal life. And when a person accepts God’s offer of forgiveness and comes to Jesus for salvation—that person is forgiven—and now is in perfect, loving fellowship with God!

**Imagine, if you will—God and man now ‘face to face’ embracing one another
in blessed communion (oneness) with each other!**

This is what Paul meant in Romans 5:1 when he said—“*Having been justified by faith [saved], we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*”—in other words, the ‘war’ is now over—God and man have reconciled and are at peace with one another!

We have laid down our hostility toward God and His commandments, surrendered our lives to Him in obedience as His servants—and He in turn has forgiven us and adopted us into His family!

This was the peace the angel was speaking of when he announced the birth of Christ to the shepherds and then said —“**Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!**”

He wasn’t talking about peace on earth between people and nations.

Jesus came the first time not to bring peace between man and his fellow man *politically*—He came the first time to bring peace between man and His God *personally*.

Now, **peace with God** (positional truth) is essential if we are going to experience the second kind of peace the Bible talks about for the child of God—‘**the peace of God**’ (practical truth).

B. The Peace of God

Philippians 4:6-7 (NKJV)

⁶ Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷ and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Let me say this—**peace with God** is *objective*, whereas the **peace of God** is *subjective*.

In Romans 5:1 when Paul talks about us having **peace with God** when we receive Jesus as our Savior—in the Greek it’s in the present tense (something that exists right now). In other words, this isn’t a peace we are waiting for in the future—it’s a peace that is ours from the moment we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior—a peace that will last unbroken forever!

When I say that **peace with God** is *objective* not subjective—I mean it isn’t based on feelings (which are up and down depending on our circumstances at the moment).

This peace (peace with God) is based on the objective truth that we have entered into a relationship with Jesus based on faith—a relationship which is eternal and never changing regardless of how you’re feeling about it at any given moment!

However, the **peace of God** is *subjective*, and because of where we are in our walk with God at any given moment—it is a peace that can ‘come and go’.

Jesus talked about this peace the night before His crucifixion:

John 14:27 (NKJV)

²⁷ Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Jesus' disciples were about to enter some very difficult days as He was preparing to go to the cross and after His resurrection—to eventually return back to His Father in heaven. So because fear and anxiety had gripped His disciples hearts—the Lord Jesus made them (and all of His disciples) a precious promise—“**Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you...**”

This is a special, supernatural peace—the kind of peace that the world can't offer and knows nothing about. When Jesus said that the *peace* He gives to those who belong to Him was “*not the kind of peace the world gives to troubled hearts*”—He's talking about the fallen world system that is controlled by the devil.

The devil knows that people can't function in an environment of stress, turmoil, anxiety and fear for very long without seeking relief (otherwise they might have a nervous breakdown). So, after ramping up their stress and fears—he (Satan) then tempts them to grab for worldly 'peace' through artificial means.

The kind of so-called “*peace*” that the devil (and through him the world he controls) offers people comes through drugs, alcohol, hypnosis, T.M., yoga—or whatever else will “help” a person escape the pressures they are experiencing in life.

If their stress and lack of peace is the result of a volatile, combative marriage—the devil tells them the only peace they will have in that situation is separation and/or divorce—in other words a peace that comes from *escaping* the situation—from running away.

King David expressed this in Psalm 55:

Psalm 55:4–8 (NLT)

⁴ My heart pounds in my chest. The terror of death assaults me. ⁵ Fear and trembling overwhelm me, and I can't stop shaking. ⁶ Oh, that I had wings like a dove; then I would fly away and rest! ⁷ I would fly far away to the quiet of the wilderness. ⁸ How quickly I would escape...

This is often the kind of peace people seek—a false peace due to 'escapism' (most often through the use of drugs and alcohol).

Listen, numbing yourself with a substance will bring some initial 'peace'—but it's not a true and lasting peace—it's an artificial peace that will lead a person into dependency to that drug and ultimately into bondage (where the 'cure' is worse than the problem they're facing). In extreme times of anxiety, pressure and depression, the devil tries to push people into the ultimate escape—suicide.

It's no mistake or accident that as our society devolves more and more into chaos, confusion, madness and anarchy—that alcoholism, drug abuse and suicides have risen exponentially.

In contrast to this Jesus said that He wants to give us *true* peace—not like the world gives (which is artificial and often destructive).

This peace is only found in Jesus, as Paul the Apostle put in Ephesians 2:14—“**For He Himself is our peace...**”

True peace in life doesn't come from a *pill* or a *program*—
it is only found in a Person, and His name is Jesus Christ.

The peace that comes from Jesus is real, lasting and liberating!

It's a true peace that the world knows nothing about because it's a supernatural peace that comes directly from God and—*"surpasses human comprehension."* (Philippians 4:7)

In John 14, in His final discourse to His disciples the night before His crucifixion—Jesus introduced the subject of His supernatural peace.

And then later on in chapter 16 He brings His discourse on the subject of peace to its climax by saying:

John 16:33 (NKJV)

³³ "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me [salvation 'peace with God'—which is where all true God given peace begins] you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Notice Jesus didn't promise that He would give us peace by *taking away* all the problems and pain in life—as He said, **"In the world you will have tribulation..."** But He promised to give us a supernatural peace *during or in the midst of* the turmoil, tragedies, pain and persecutions that we would experience in this life as we live in this fallen world system.

The **peace of God** is a peace that only a child of God can experience—because it's an *attribute* of His divine nature (the fruit of the Spirit is *"love, joy, peace..."*—Galatians 5:22-23).

The only way for a person to experience any attribute of God in their life (all of which are exclusive to His nature)—is to have God's nature *planted* within them. That only happens when they receive Jesus into their heart as Savior and the Holy Spirit moves in (which is what it means to be 'born-again' or 'born of the Spirit'—John 3).

At that moment, as Peter tells us, they become *"partakers of God's divine nature"* (2Peter 1:4)—which brings us back to our text in John chapter 20:

John 20:19–22 (NKJV)

¹⁹ Then, the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace *be* with you." ²⁰ When He had said this, He showed them *His* hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹ So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." ²² And when He had said this, He breathed on *them*, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

At this point the Holy Spirit entered into Jesus' disciples making them, *"partakers of God's divine nature"*—and official born-again New Testament believers.

I want to talk about this incredibly important truth next time in our study of John's gospel—which tells us that the Christian life is a supernatural life that can only be lived when Jesus, through the indwelling Holy Spirit, lives inside of us.

Let me end by saying that the peace of God (practical, every day peace) doesn't happen automatically once you become a Christian.

In fact, some of you might be thinking to yourself—*"Well, I'm a Christian and I still feel overwhelmed with stress, anxiety and a lack of peace—so what gives!?"*

It is true that many Christians still worry, still experience stress, still have nervous breakdowns—and even sometimes still commit suicide.

- *Why is that?*
- *God promised us peace once we gave our hearts to Jesus—so why are so many Christians not experiencing this peace?*

The reason is they aren't following the biblical injunctions for maintaining practical, everyday peace in their hearts. We need to understand what the apostle Paul admonished in Colossians 3:15—“Let the peace of God rule in your hearts...”

By saying this Paul was implying that the peace of God *can* (and will) rule in our hearts—**if we let it!**

But listen—God's peace can be *hindered* or ‘*strangled to death*’ through worry by focusing our thoughts on the problem (like Peter on the Sea of Galilee) instead of on the God who can solve any problem—

2 Corinthians 4:16–18 (NLT)

¹⁶ That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. ¹⁷ For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! ¹⁸ So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

Colossians 3:2 (NKJV)

² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

Philippians 4:8–9 (NLT)

⁸ And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. ⁹ Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.

Isaiah 26:3 (NKJV)

³ You will keep *him* in perfect peace, *Whose mind is stayed on You*, Because he trusts in You.

The Hebrew in Isaiah 26:3 is “*You will keep him in peace, peace...*” or in other words, “*double peace*” or “*perfect peace!*”

But to experience this peace you need to have your thoughts “*stayed*” (fixed) on God—because you trust Him and have absolute confidence in His *power* (ability to solve any problem) and *promises*—

Romans 4:21 (NKJV)

²¹ and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.

This peace can only come through faith—and faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. (Romans 10:17)

Galatians 2:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Trust in His Word and cling to His promises in this season of uncertainty remembering that—the just shall live by faith—

Philippians 4:7 (NKJV)

⁷ and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

The Christian life in general is the greatest ‘new beginning’ you will ever experience!

In John 20:19-23, Jesus was about to turn the most important work the world would ever know to His disciples (including us) to go into all the world preaching the good news of the Kingdom of God.

For this all-important work they would need the supernatural peace (and power) of God—which we’ll look more at next time.

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Reach out to us [here](#).

Want to know more? Click [here](#).



Pastor Phil Ballmaier is the Senior Pastor at Calvary Chapel Elk Grove, a non-denominational fellowship located in the northwest suburbs of Chicago.

Pastor Phil can be heard on Day By Day Radio Program on AM1160 Chicago, Monday-Friday at 6:00 PM and 4:30 AM, and on Calvary Radio Network at 9:00 AM.

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